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Oratia - Parks - Parrs Park

NEWS

Unsafe reserve under Parr

THE PATH THROUGH BENITA RESERVE HAS BEEN TAGGED STEVEN MCNICHOLL

Glen Eden locals are angry that a popular park is being hit by tagging and vandalism, and the council seems helpless. *Joanna Davies* reports

Graffiti covers the trees and the footpath. Two dogs run through bush that is littered with bottles and cans. Benita Reserve, tucked into a secluded corner of Parrs Park in Glen Eden, has been a problem spot for years.

One resident, who lives near the reserve and prefers not to be named, says the spot is unsafe to walk through because groups of youths hang out there.

"It just feels intimidating," she says. "It's easier to drive around to the Parrs Park carpark and go to the park that way."

Some residents have complained about youths intimidating people and tagging. Improvements to the park have done little to drive out the groups.

Henderson Community Board chairwoman Elizabeth Grimmer says the problems have been going on for years.

"A lot of people from the West Coast Rd developments use the accessway to get to the park," she says.

"We have trimmed back the trees and tidied up the vegetation to make the area more open, but it's an ongoing problem because people still feel unsafe."

In 2003, the area was replanted and a new path laid to connect with Parrs Park.

But the walkway has been splattered with graffiti and the picnic table has been ripped away, says Waitakere City Council's public affairs spokeswoman, Sonya Leahy.

"The council and the local community worked together to design features of the reserve, which included the picnic table and seating," she says. "It is disappointing that all the hard work is being undone by the poor behaviour of a small sector of the community."

The problems at Benita Reserve are just the start of troubles within Parrs Park. Oratia United Football Club uses the grounds as its home base. The club's shower block is vandalised and the clubrooms have been broken into six times over the past 12 months.

"It's a big park, and some parts are very secluded," says club chairman Mike Hayes. "There's just nowhere else for the kids to go around here."

He says that unless there are other places for youths to go, the problems will continue.

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